

2017

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Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



Cover Photo provided by Kristina Luttrell

District 10 Hunting Prospects

Lewis, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties

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DISTRICT 10 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 10 is located in southwestern Washington and includes Lewis, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties. Game management units (GMUs) in this district include 501 (Lincoln), 503 (Randle), 504 (Stella), 505 (Mossyrock), 506 (Willapa Hills), 510 (Stormking), 513 (South Rainier), 516 (Packwood), 520 (Winston), 522 (Loo-Wit), 524 (Margaret), 530 (Ryderwood), 550 (Coweeman), and 556 (Toutle). The topography of this wide area ranges from tidally influenced Columbia River shorelines in Wahkiakum County to Cascade peaks in Lewis County.

A high percentage of this district is in private ownership, which presents a variety of access options and challenges. The recent trend is for timber companies to limit public access to their land or sell access permits for hunting seasons to a limited number of participants.

Understanding the recreational access policies of individual timber companies is an important step in planning your hunt. Recreational access information is typically available on timber company websites or by calling access hotlines. A list of recreational access websites and hotlines maintained by private industrial timber companies is included at the end of this document. It is always a good idea to obtain a map from the landowner where you wish to hunt.

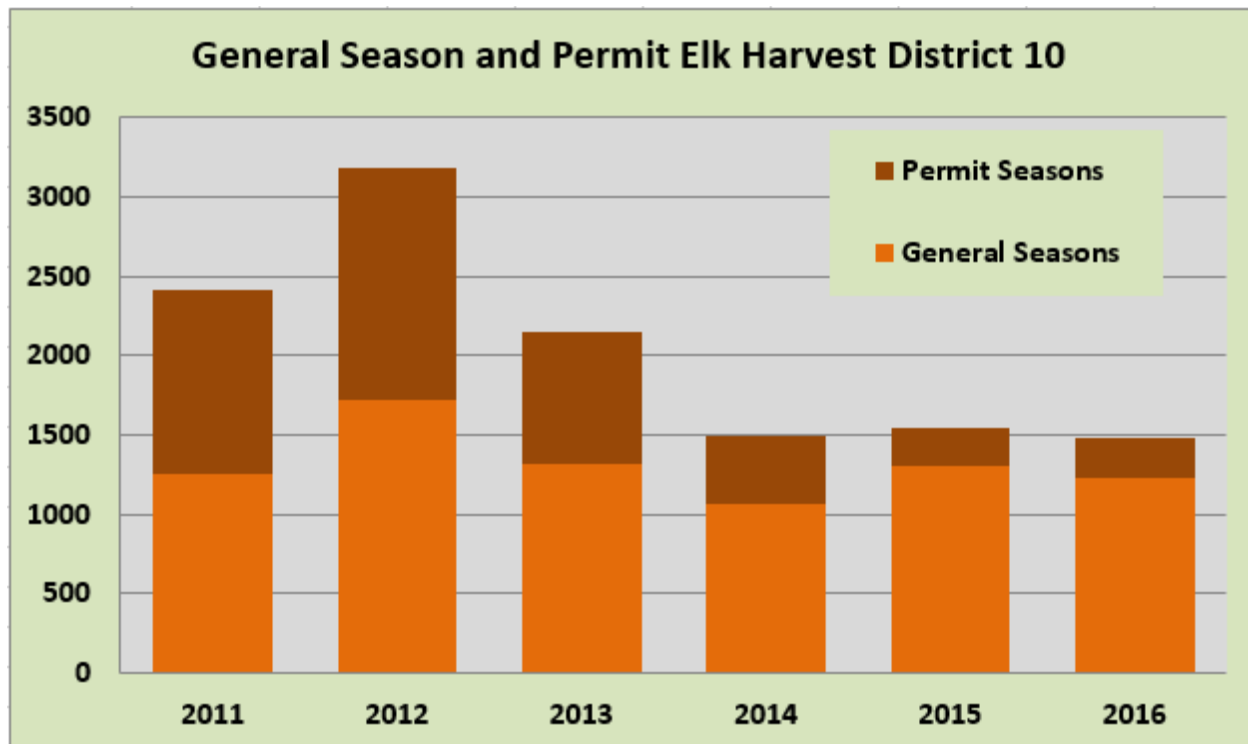
Weyerhaeuser owns a significant amount of land in District 10. Major changes to hunting access implemented in 2015 include a requirement that hunters purchase an access permit to hunt on Weyerhaeuser land, including the St. Helens Tree Farm (GMUs 550, 520, 524, and 556). As of this writing, motorized access permits are being sold for between \$225 and \$350; non-motorized access permits are \$50. Information about permits for recreational access to Weyerhaeuser land, including maps, can be found [here](#) or by emailing WeyerhaeuserColumbiaTimberlandsRecreation@weyerhaeuser.com or calling 1-866-636-6531.

Other industrial timber company lands are generally open to public hunting without an access fee, but vehicle access may be limited. Other major industrial forest landowners in District 10 include Hancock Forest Management, Port Blakely, Sierra Pacific, Green Diamond (permit fee access), and Pope Resources/Olympic Resource Management. Access to these lands may be restricted in August, September, and – in some cases – October due to high fire danger. More information about hunting opportunities on private land can be found on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) [Private Lands webpage](#), on page 96 of the Big Game pamphlet, or at the [GoHunt mapping](#) site.

Public land in the district includes WDFW's [Cowlitz](#) and [Mount St. Helens](#) wildlife areas, the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in eastern Lewis and Cowlitz counties, and state land managed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) scattered throughout all three counties. These state and federal are open to public access. Contact the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Cowlitz Valley Ranger District at 360-497-1100 or visit the agency's [website](#). Information about DNR managed lands can be obtained by contacting the Castle Rock DNR office at 360-577-2025 or visiting the [Department's website](#).

ELK

District 10 has historically been among the leaders in statewide harvest of elk. The highest general season harvests in 2016 occurred in GMUs 520 (Winston), 506 (Willapa Hills), 530 (Ryderwood), and 550 (Coweeman). There are also many permit hunts in District 10, which are offered to manage the elk population, address agricultural damage caused by elk, and provide recreational opportunity. Additionally, two GMUs – 522 (Loo-Wit) and 556 (Toutle) – are permit-only for both cow and bull elk. In 2016, a total of 1,229 elk were harvested during the general season in addition to 255 elk harvested by permit in District 10. Elk found west of Interstate 5 are considered to be of the Roosevelt sub-species, while those in the Cascade Mountain Range are of mixed origin. Specifically, Cascade elk are a genetic combination of native Roosevelt elk and introduced Rocky Mountain elk.



SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FOR 2017

GMU 524 Margaret Elk

While no new hunting regulations are in play for the 2017 season, hunters should be aware of a change that is still in effect from 2015. GMU 524 (Margaret) changed to general season hunting for bull elk instead of being managed as a permit-only GMU. Starting in 2015, general season bull hunts were opened to archers, muzzleloader hunters, and modern firearm hunters. The hunt dates correspond to the general season structure for western Washington and all user-groups are

under the 3-point antler restriction. Antlerless opportunity for Margaret is still managed on a special permit basis.

Hunters should be aware that the easternmost portion of the Margaret GMU, located within the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, is closed to general season elk hunting. The portion of Margaret not open to general season hunting is identified by the Norway Pass Elk Area #5066. Elk hunting for all user groups in this area is now managed by special permit. For detailed information on the boundaries of Elk Area 5066 and specifics on elk hunting permits in this area, see the 2017 Big Game pamphlet.

Muzzleloader Elk

As part of the statewide effort in 2015 to provide additional elk hunting opportunity to muzzleloader elk hunters, many additional GMUs within District 10 are now open for general season muzzleloader hunts. GMUs 505 (Mossyrock), 506 (Willapa Hills), 510 (Stormking), 513 (South Rainier), 516 (Packwood), 520 (Winston), 524 (Margaret), 530 (Ryderwood) and 550 (Coweeman) all offer early muzzleloader general seasons for 3-point or larger bulls during the October season.

ELK POPULATION INFORMATION

Elk populations in the game management units comprising the Mount St. Helens elk herd area are down from historic highs reached during the mid-2000s. This population reduction was implemented per the objectives of the [St. Helens Elk Herd Plan](#). Liberal antlerless elk hunting opportunity, combined with some years of late winter and spring storms, have reduced the elk population in these GMUs. Most recently, the winter of 2016-17 was unusually severe, with early snowfall and persistent cold wet conditions throughout the winter. These conditions are hard on elk. Severe winters are made worse when animals are in relatively poor condition entering the winter. Elk within the St. Helens herd typically lack large fat reserves to help with long, hard winters.

Reflecting these challenging conditions, the 2017 spring survey of elk in the monitored portions of the St. Helens herd showed a decrease in the population of elk. More specifically, elk populations were down 30-35 percent from 2016 numbers. These indicators point toward a generally less productive elk hunting season during the 2017 hunt. Antlerless hunting opportunity has been reduced accordingly.

Survey information portion of the Willapa Hills elk herd in District 10 is not available for 2017. Surveys in this elk population are conducted on an every-other-year basis, with the next one scheduled in 2018. Surveys conducted in 2014 and 2016 indicate a stable or slightly increasing elk population in GMUs 506 Willapa Hills and 530 Ryderwood. Severe winter conditions rarely cause population level impacts to Willapa elk populations and hunting opportunities and success rates should be similar to recent years. The general bull elk season is always challenging, but the

District 10 elk population produces a harvest of more than 1,000 bull elk annually, and those hunters who put in the effort and remain focused may be rewarded with success.



Photo by Sam Kolb (WDFW)

Hunting Strategies during Fire Restrictions

Early hunting season access for archery hunters is often complicated by hot weather and fire access closures. If that occurs, hunters should consider going west to GMUs 506 or 530 (Willapa Hills and Ryderwood), where blocks of state (DNR) forest lands are available. Another good choice during times of fire danger is GMUs 513 (South Rainier) and 516 (Packwood), which are comprised mostly of national forest lands. These public lands almost always stay open during times of high fire danger, but be sure to check with land managers before heading to the field.

Elk Scouting Strategies

Using the [GoHunt mapping](#) online tool to look at aerial photos to identify recent clearcuts and drainages is a good start for identifying areas to hunt. Pre-season scouting on the commercial tree farms is usually done by bike or on foot, as most areas will not be open to motorized access at that time. Motorized access and camping are available on state DNR lands unless there is high fire danger. Prospective elk hunters should keep in mind that the animals often prefer cooler, wetter areas during times of warmer weather, and are more often active during dawn and dusk.

Additional Resources for Those Interested in District 10 Elk

[Annual harvest reports](#) and harvest statistics for deer and elk based on hunter reporting can be found on the WDFW website. For more information regarding elk management in WDFW Region 5 (Districts 9 and 10), see page 128 of the 2016 Elk Status and Trend Report located on the WDFW website at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01875/>



Photo by Eric Holman (WDFW)

ELK HOOF DISEASE (TREPONEME BACTERIA)

Since 2008, reports of elk with deformed, broken, or missing hooves have increased dramatically in southwest Washington, with sporadic observations in other areas west of the Cascade Range.

While elk have long suffered from “hoof rot,” a relatively common livestock disease, the rapid spread and severity of this new affliction was something altogether different.

Scientific tests commissioned by WDFW in 2013 found that these abnormalities were strongly associated with treponeme bacteria, known to cause digital dermatitis in cattle, sheep and goats. Although this disease has plagued the dairy industry for decades, the treponeme bacteria had never before been documented in elk or any other wildlife species.

Since then, WDFW has continued to work with scientists, veterinarians, outdoor organizations and others to develop management strategies for elk infected by treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD).

Several aspects of TAHD in elk are clear:

- **Vulnerability:** The disease appears to be highly infectious among elk, but there is no evidence that it affects humans. TAHD can affect any hoof in any elk, young or old, male or female.
- **Hooves only:** Tests show the disease is limited to animals’ hooves, and does not affect their meat or organs. If the meat looks normal and if hunters harvest, process and cook it practicing good hygiene, it is probably safe to eat.
- **No treatment:** Currently, there is no vaccine to prevent the disease, nor are there any proven options for treating it in the field. Similar diseases in livestock are treated by cleaning and bandaging their hooves and giving them foot baths, but that is not a realistic option for free-ranging elk.

Counties with confirmed cases of TAHD

As of March 2016, WDFW had confirmed cases of elk afflicted with TAHD in Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Pacific, Pierce, Skamania and Wahkiakum counties. In the year that followed a few additional cases were also documented in Thurston, Mason and King counties.

Since 2015, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has also confirmed TAHD in elk populations in both western and eastern Oregon.

How hunters can help

- **Leave hooves:** Scientists believe that treponeme bacteria are associated with moist soil and spread to new areas on the hooves of infected elk. For that reason, WDFW requires hunters to remove the hooves of any elk taken in affected areas and leave them onsite. During the 2017-18 hunting season, this rule applies to GMUs 407, 418, 437, 454, 501-564, 633, 636 and 642-699.

- **Report elk:** Hunters can help WDFW track TAHD by reporting observations of both affected and unaffected elk on the department's [online reporting form](#).
- **Clean shoes and tires:** Anyone who hikes or drives off-road in a known affected area can help minimize the risk of spreading the disease to new areas by removing all mud from their shoes and tires before leaving the area.

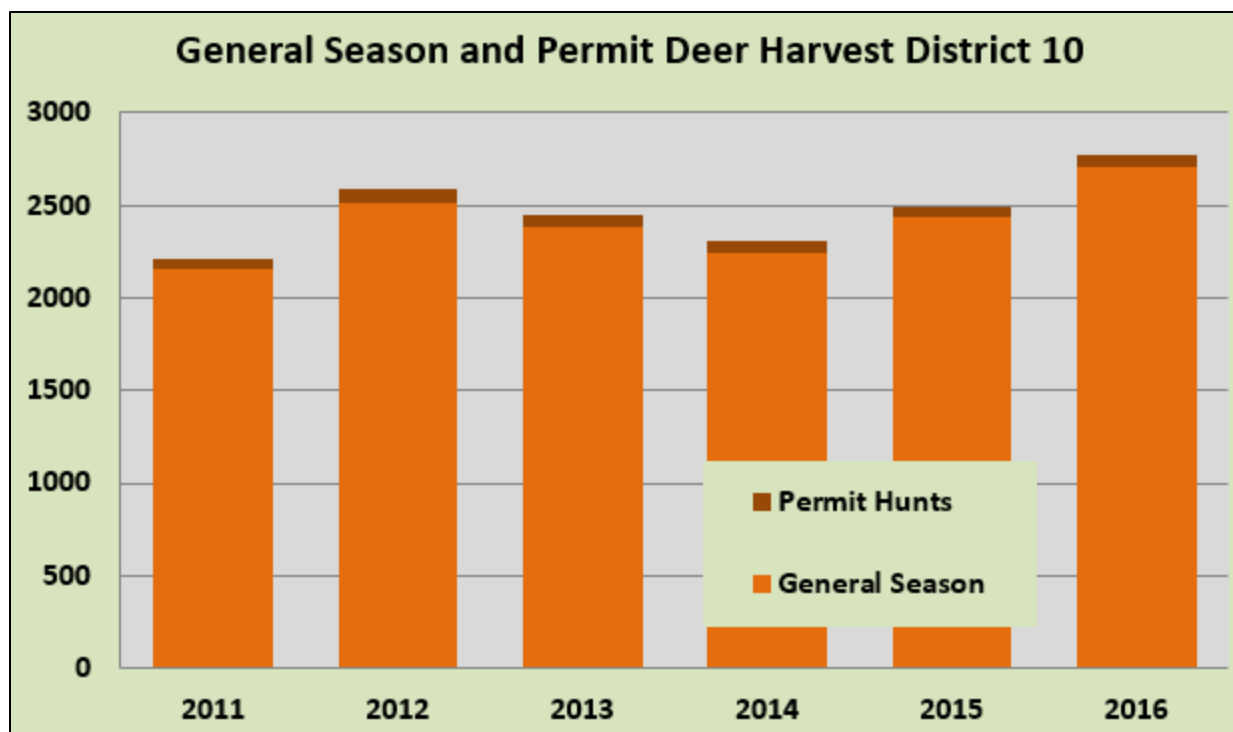
WDFW is currently studying the effects of the disease on Washington elk populations and the state Legislature approved \$1.5 million to support efforts by Washington State University to monitor and research the disease.



Photo by Eric Holman (WDFW)

DEER

Several GMUs in District 10 are among the best in the state for black-tailed deer harvest. The highest 2016 general season buck harvests within District 10 occurred in GMUs 530 (Ryderwood), 550 (Coweeman), 520 (Winston), and 505 (Mossyrock). The majority of the harvest occurs during general seasons for each user group, with a small portion of the harvest occurring during special permit seasons (see figure below). For more information on deer in District 10, see the annual Game Status and Trend Report on the WDFW website at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01875/>



Black-tailed deer populations are stable in District 10. The annual harvest of more than 2,000 bucks has been typical for many years. The severe winter of 2016-17 may cause a slight decline in availability of yearling bucks and therefore hunter success for 2017.

Hunting for black-tailed deer is often best near the end of the general season, when conditions improve for stalking and moving through the woods in heavily vegetated western Washington. The best opportunity often occurs during the late buck hunt, when favorable stalking and weather conditions combine with the breeding season or rut. The 2017 late buck season runs November 16-19. Black-tailed deer generally favor dense vegetation and have small home ranges. The most successful hunters study the area carefully and move very slowly, constantly searching for deer.



Photo by Gary Bell (WDFW)

BEAR

District 10 makes up part of both the South Cascades and Coastal black bear hunt zones for the fall bear hunting season. In the Coastal hunt zone, the season runs from August 1 to November 15. In the South Cascades hunt zone, the season starts on August 15 and runs through November 15. Harvest numbers and hunter success for 2016 in the South Cascades and Coastal zones were 119 (3.5 percent success) and 158 (5.2 percent success), respectively. For more information on the management of black bears in Washington, including the Coastal and South Cascades management zones, see page 227 of the annual [Status and Trend report](#).

Successful bear hunters must submit a premolar tooth. See page 67 of the Big Game pamphlet for details.

Hunting for black bears is challenging, but also can be rewarding. Hunters should try a variety of methods, including targeting areas of favored foods like huckleberries, blackberries, cascara

trees, etc. Other methods include glassing clear cuts or alpine areas at dawn and dusk, as well as predator calling.



Photo by Nicholle Stephens (WDFW)

COUGAR

In 2016-2017, hunters harvested eight cougars in the GMUs that make up District 10. Cougar hunting in this region is managed under a harvest guideline designed to harvest 12-16 percent of the population (excluding kittens) annually. The harvest guideline may be achieved during the fall hunt, and prospective hunters should visit the WDFW [website](#) to assure that the season in their prospective area remains open.

Most cougar hunting in western Washington occurs as an additional opportunity concurrent with deer and elk hunting. Hunters who want to harvest cougars should focus on areas with concentrations of deer and elk. Fresh snow greatly facilitates tracking and hunters may want to try predator calling.



Photo from Biologists Stephens, George, and Holman (WDFW)

MOUNTAIN GOAT

The Goat Rocks/Tieton River goat hunt area has five special permits for the 2017 hunting season, and is one of the premier spots in the state for hunting mountain goat. Goat populations in the area have remained stable at approximately 300 goats over several years. Hunter success in this unit is usually 100%.

Beginning in 2015, successful mountain goat hunters were required to bring the head and horns of their animal to the closest WDFW regional or district office for biological sampling within 10 days of harvest. This regulation is in effect for the 2017 hunt as well. Successful draw applicants will receive a letter with additional details.



Photo by WDFW

PHEASANT

Western Washington Pheasant Release Program

Pheasants are released for hunting at three locations in District 10. These are located at Kosmos (Lewis County), Woodland Bottoms (Cowlitz County), and Lincoln (Lewis County). For more information about the pheasant release program in western Washington, visit the [WDFW website](#).

Youth hunters and those over 65 years of age should be sure to check the regulations closely for opportunities to hunt earlier in the season than other user groups.



Photo by WDFW

FOREST GROUSE

District 10 supports substantial forest grouse populations and is one of the top producing areas for hunters in western Washington. Spring conditions for chick survival were good this year,

which should translate into good grouse hunting this fall. Hunting riparian areas with mixed forest species and walking closed or abandoned roads are good strategies for grouse hunting.



Photo by WDFW

WATERFOWL

Duck and goose hunting will be good this fall after the rains in November and December encourage birds to come south into the area. As of this writing, the results from surveys to monitor duck populations in 2017 were not yet available from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, but populations in recent years have been substantially higher than long-term averages. See the following sources for information on North American waterfowl populations (2017 information should appear soon):

<http://flyways.us/>

<https://www.fws.gov/birds/surveys-and-data/reports-and-publications/population-status.php>

Hunters are reminded to consult the [Migratory Waterfowl Rules](#) pamphlet for details. Prospective hunters should take special note of the late September season open only to youth hunters. Check the regulations closely for the details on this mentored hunting opportunity for early season ducks.

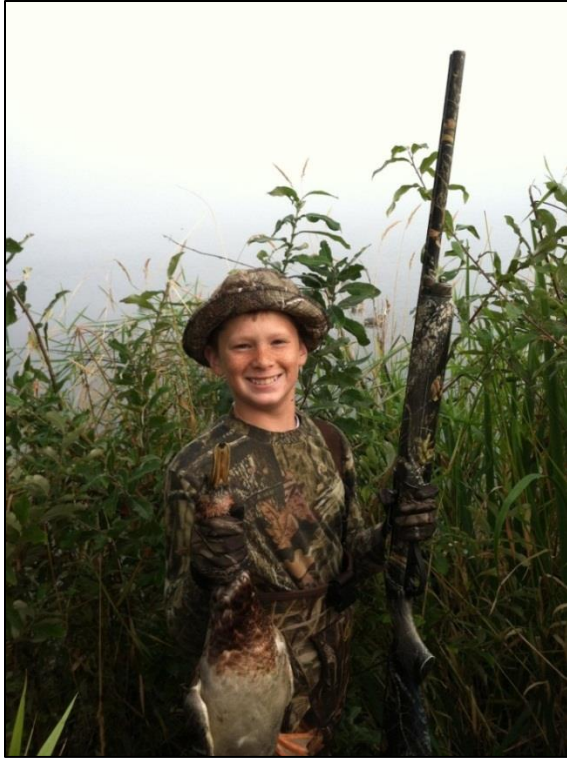
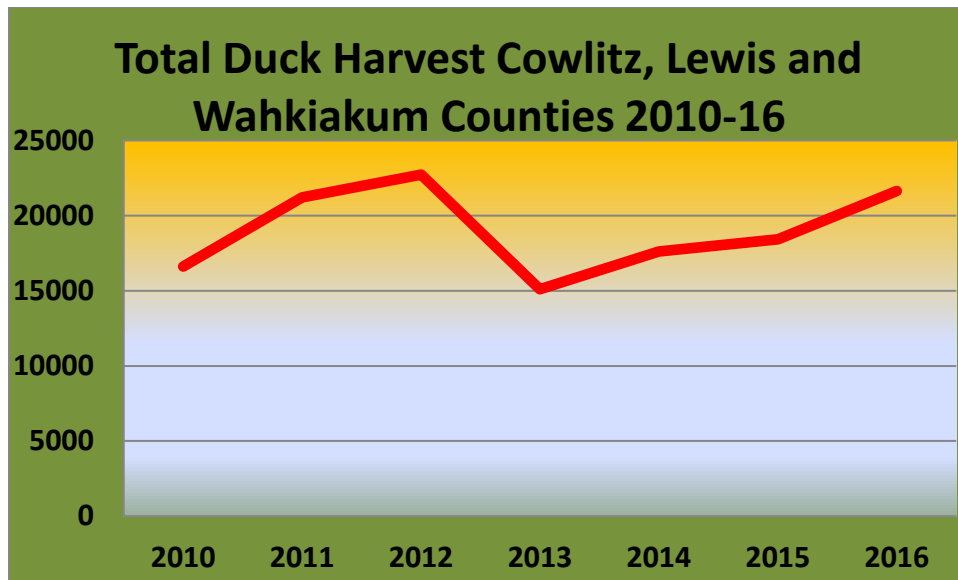


Photo by Keith Harris

Hunting early in the season is often best along the Columbia River and other large, permanent bodies of water. The Columbia River up to the Bonneville Dam is tidally influenced, so it is a good idea to watch for outgoing tide conditions to avoid having your boat get stuck. Later in the season, high water might disperse birds, and hunters may have more success by targeting flooded farmlands. More information about how to hunt waterfowl can be found on the department's [waterfowl webpage](#).

Duck harvest in 2016 was 6,339 in Cowlitz County, 9,787 in Lewis County, and 5,605 in Wahkiakum County. The duck harvest in 2016-17 was up from the past two seasons. Prospective hunters should be aware that success often depends on the severity of fall/winter weather, with wet, blustery conditions generally producing better duck hunting in southwest Washington.



GOOSE HUNTING

Hunters are reminded of the complex goose hunting regulations in Goose Management Area 2 designed to protect wintering populations of the dusky Canada goose. New hunters and those whose hunting authorization for Goose Management Area 2 was invalidated the previous year need to pass an exam with a minimum of 80% to receive their current year hunting authorization.

Significant Changes to Area 2 (Formerly Area 2A) Goose Hunting

Goose hunting in Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties are subject to the additional restrictions of Goose Management Area 2, which are in place to protect the dusky subspecies of the Canada goose. Goose hunters are encouraged to review the different subspecies of Canada geese in southwest Washington, where the ability to identify those birds is critical for a productive and enjoyable season.

For the 2017-18 southwest Washington goose season, the Fish and Wildlife Commission, in cooperation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the states of Oregon and Alaska, approved the following changes:

- The season for dusky Canada geese is **closed** and hunters will be cited for taking a dusky Canada goose.
- Area 2A/2B boundaries have been combined and are now known as Area 2. Area 2 includes all of Clark, Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, Pacific and Grays Harbor counties.
- Hunting hours for geese were extended to 30 minutes after the start of official hunting hours to 30 minutes before the end of official hunting hours
- Hunters are no longer required to record harvest or bring birds to check stations.

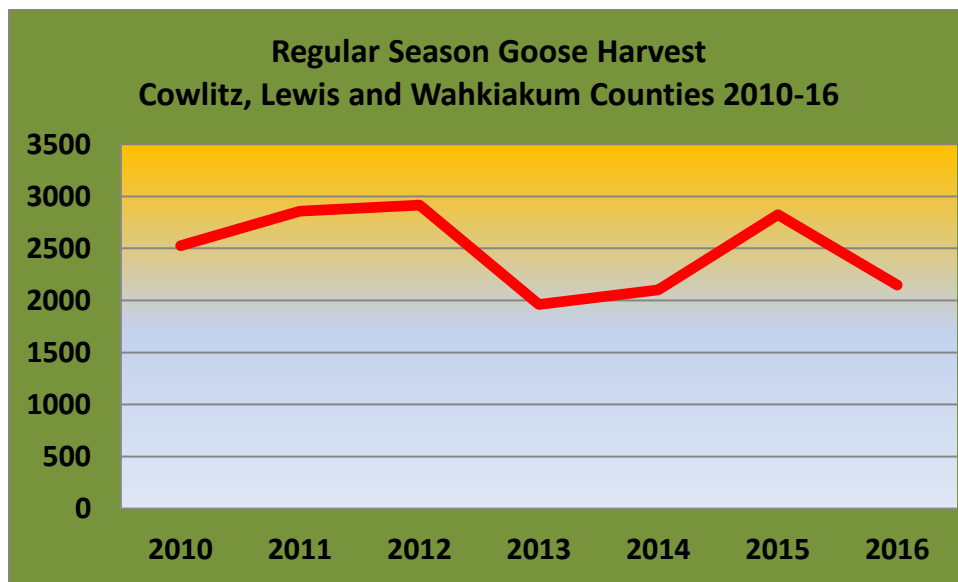
- General season ending dates were extended to March and the Late Season was discontinued. All hunters can now participate in the February-March season, but only on private lands. No hunting is allowed on National Wildlife Refuges and WDFW Wildlife Areas.
- The goose hunting season will be open every day from October 14-29, 2017.

Please review the revised [goose identification training program](#) prior to hunting this season, and see the [2017-18 WDFW Migratory Waterfowl & Upland Game Seasons pamphlet](#) for more information. Wildlife managers are relying on southwest goose hunters to make this new season format successful so goose hunting will remain open in permit zones.

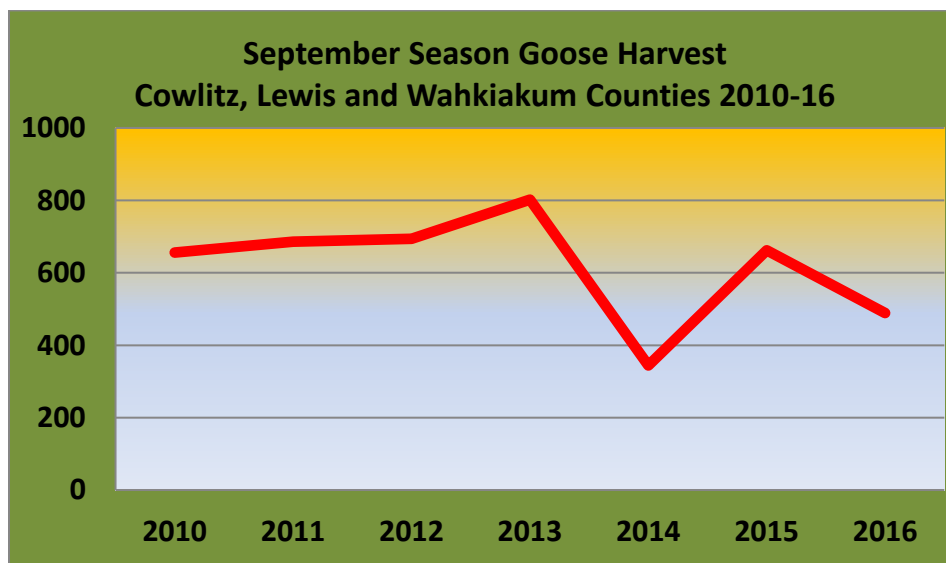


Canada geese during a banding effort in southwest Washington – Photo by Brian Davern

While dusky Canada geese remain of concern, several other subspecies are abundant and support large annual harvests. Regular fall goose harvest in 2016 was 761 birds in Cowlitz County, 945 in Lewis County, and 441 in Wahkiakum County.



Goose hunters are also encouraged to take advantage of the early goose season, which takes place in September. See the waterfowl hunting pamphlet for details on this enjoyable goose hunt for western Canada geese. Harvest during the September season in 2016 was 70 in Cowlitz County, 496 in Lewis County, and 96 in Wahkiakum County.



PUBLIC LAND RESOURCES

DNR-Pacific Cascades Office (SW WA)

601 Bond Road

PO Box 280

Castle Rock, WA 98611-0280

Phone: 360-577-2025

pacific-cascade.region@dnr.wa.gov

Link to purchase DNR quadrangle maps:

http://www.dnr.wa.gov/BusinessPermits/Topics/Maps/Pages/public_lands_quadrangle_maps.aspx

Gifford Pinchot National Forest

Headquarters

10600 N.E. 51st Circle

Vancouver, WA 98682

(360) 891-5000

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/giffordpinchot/>

Cowlitz Valley Ranger District

10024 US Hwy 12

PO Box 670

Randle, WA 98377

(360) 497-1100

Mt. Adams Ranger District

2455 Hwy 141

Trout Lake, WA 98650

(509) 395-3402

Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument

42218 N.E. Yale Bridge Road

Amboy, WA 98601

(360) 449-7800

Link to purchase ranger district maps:

http://www.nationalforeststore.com/merchant.mvc?Screen=CTGY&Store_Code=NFS&Category_Code=R6WA

PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL FORESTLANDS

Green Diamond

- Recreation permits must be purchased for motorized and non-motorized access
- <http://www.greendiamond.com/recreation/FAQ/>

Hancock Forest Management (HFM)

HFM Cathlamet Tree Farm

- Open for non-motorized recreation access
- Access hotline 360-795-3653

Pope Resources/Olympic Resource Management

- Generally open to walk-in access
- <http://www.orm.com/Timberlands/PublicUse.aspx>

Port Blakely

- Generally open to walk-in access
- <https://www.portblakely.com/pb-tree-farms/public-access-policy/policy>

Sierra Pacific

- Generally open to walk-in, day-use access with select areas open for motorized access
- Access hotline 360-623-1299

Weyerhaeuser

- Recreational access hotline-866-636-6531, recreation webpage:
<http://www.weyerhaeuser.com/Businesses/RecreationalAccess/Washington>
- Includes St. Helens Tree Farm, Yacolt (Columbia River East), Vail, Pe Ell, Columbia Timberlands
 - Access is by permit only and permits can be purchased on the website above. Please see website for details including maps.
 - Permit required for recreational access year round
 - Motored and non-motorized permits available
 - Permits go on sale in May or June and generally sell out quickly